

07 October, 2005

Federal Communications Commission

Re: Proceeding 04-186

Dear Sirs/Madam:

For many years I have observed the ILECs couch blackmail demands in the form of promises, “deregulate and give us the world and we will bring broadband to the masses.” As Commissioner Copps pointed out, they have kept none of their promises. America today ranks 16th in the world for broadband penetration. How can the wealthiest nation on earth make such a dismal showing?

Recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina demonstrate a clear solution to America’s embarrassing plight. Two days after the disaster while BellSouth and Comcast remained in planning stages, independent Wireless Internet Service Providers from all parts of the country had converged on affected areas and installed communications to most of the shelters. While FEMA and legacy communication service providers began their recovery efforts, WISPs from far corners of America were already helping victims contact family, complete insurance forms online and cooking meals in shelters.*

The miraculous overnight restoration of communication services was accomplished by America’s small business community without any help from our federal government. We didn’t ask for subsidies or funding or tax breaks. Men and women with meager resources closed their businesses, packed up vans and trucks and drove to the disaster. They brought generators, wireless networking equipment, supplies, knowledge and the kind of heart that made this nation great.

They built wireless backhauls to devastated towns, set up shelters with Internet connected computers and IP based voice service long before the legacy providers could begin to react. All of this done with cobbled together parts and the determination to succeed. And such has been the case for wireless broadband providers from the beginning. The innovators, the best of the best have built viable wireless broadband networks for rural America with stone knives and bearskins. Now 700MHz spectrum, a real tool we could use to light up America is on the table and we hear “mine, mine, mine” from the NAB.

Three and a half years ago Senator McCain pointed out the broken promises by what the Wall Street Journal referred to as “wealthy TV-station owners”**. The senator noted that in 1997, NAB President Eddie Fritts stated on "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer" that broadcasters’ use of spectrum allocated to first responders was merely a “loan to facilitate an orderly transition.” Today Senator McCain is calling in that loan.*** The 700MHz spectrum belongs to the American people; not a few wealthy corporation owners.

The ILECs and cable companies have had their shot at providing broadband to every American. The dismal result is half the civilized world having more broadband access than Americans. Now another special interest group stands in the way spewing nonsense as fact.

I ask that you examine recent events and look at the progress made in the past decade. If continued decline in America’s broadband penetration ranking is the goal, then by all means let the NAB broadcast sitcoms on 700MHz while the ILECs and cable companies concentrate their build-out in the wealthiest urban areas. If you’d prefer to see rural America lit up with broadband access overnight, give wireless broadband providers the 700MHz tool we need to effectively provide last mile coverage.

Respectfully,

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* <http://www.cnn.com/2005/TECH/10/05/katrina.tech.response.ap/index.html>
October 6, 2005 Katrina aftermath wireless proving ground

** http://mrtmag.com/news/radio_sen_mccain_criticizes/ *Mar 27, 2002 12:00 PM*
Sen. McCain criticizes delay in digital TV transition

<http://www.dailywireless.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=4715>
September 20 2005 **McCain: Broadcasters Squatting on 700Mhz**